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The Relation of
Thomas Love Peacock
to his Period

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THE RELATION OF THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK TO HIS PERIOD

BY
CORNELIA ETHEL WOOD, A. B. 1903

THESIS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN ENGLISH

IN THE
GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

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ENTITLED The Relation of Thomas Love Peacock to his Period

IS APPROVED BY ME AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF Master of Arts

Daniel Kilham Dodge

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF English

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T H O M A S L O V E P E A C O C K

H I S T O R Y O F L I F E

S T Y L E

a. Dialogue. b. Characterization.

L O V E O F N A T U R E

H U M O R

a. Puns. b. Comedy Situations.

S A T I R E

Social. Political. Literary.

The Relation of Thomas Love Peacock to his Period

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Vol. 20, P. 189

George Barnett Smith.

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T H O M A S L O V E P E A C O C K .

In all of those respects in which an author is of permanent benefit to mankind Thomas Love Peacock is worthy of occupying an eminent position. His vast learning, precise style, his great research, boundless sarcasm, intense abhorrence of cant are all so many claims upon our regard.¹"

Thomas Love Peacock, whose works are known by a very small minority of the English reading public at the present time, has had more than one such tribute, as the above, paid to his genius. His genius is of a peculiar kind, he holds a distinctive and individual place in the world of letters.

Even in his own time Peacock was not a popular writer, in fact, his works have been aptly described as "caviare to the general." But I believe that even the 'general' might thoroly enjoy at least half of his publications, if they possessed an intimate acquaintance with the life, character and pursuits of this laughing philosopher.

A knowledge of the life of the writer, - his easy going habits, his genial disposition, his rectitude of character, his favorite books and intimate friends - throws a flood of light upon the humor and satire in which he delights to indulge.

Thomas Love Peacock was born at Weymouth, 1785. His father was a London glass merchant who died when Thomas was three years of age. He was an only child, and his mother's constant companionship and tender care for, and sympathy with her son had a great influence in the formation of his very or-
1- Fortnightly Review Vol. 20 P. 206

iginal character. His maternal grandfather, a retired sea captain, made one of the family and is introduced to the public as Captain Hawltanght in "Melincourt"

The family lived at Chertsey until Thomas was sixteen years old. At the age of eight he entered a private school at Englefield Green; which he attended until he was thirteen when he evidently decided that his school days were over. It is said that " he inspired his teachers with a presage of his future literary prowess."¹

From this immature age he was self taught. He had a passion for reading and a strong predilection for the classics. His mother, merely observing that his tendency was for the best things of literature, allowed him to " browse thru the library at will." Here is probably the first step toward eccentricity, for if the glass-blower had lived he would very likely have insisted upon his only son's receiving a school and university education.

At the age of sixteen his family moved to London and Thomas took advantage of the rich opportunities presented by the British Museum for the study of the ancient relics, and statues.

²" A passage in a letter written in his old age is significant of his precocious pleasure in learning, and accounts for the unusual range he followed in his studies.' I was early impressed with the words of Harris; "to be completely skilled in ancient learning is by no means a work of such

1-Contemporary Rev.

2-Edinburgh Review, Vol. 142, P. 59.

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insuperable pains. The very progress itself is attended with delight and resembles a journey thru some pleasant country, where every mile we advance new charms arise. It is certainly as easy to be a scholar as a gamester, or many other characters equally illberal and low. The same application, the same quantity of habit, will fit us for the one as completely as for the other." Thus encouraged I took to reading the best books, illustrated by the best critics, and amongst the latter, I feel especially indebted to Heyne and Hermann. Such was my education."

¹ Robert Buchanan, a personal friend of Peacock's who has written "Personal Reminiscences" of Thomas Love Peacock" and his granddaughter, Edith Nichols, who has written a short sketch of her grandfather's life - which appears in the best edition of his works, seem to me by far the most reliable sources for the personal characteristics of Peacock, and I have based the investigation of this phase of the consideration upon their authority.

Robert Buchanan relates the story of Peacock's first love affair. It occurred in 1808 and altho he loved and was loved the affair for some reason was broken off. The lady married but died soon after and altho Peacock married later, in life, his friend makes us infer that this first love influenced, dominated and softened his life.

In this same year Peacock was given an under-secretaryship to Sir Home Popham, who was then commanding a fleet at Flushing. He disliked sea life and refused to continue in this position.

During one of his many walking tours, he met

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Shelley in Wales in 1812. A close friendship sprung up between the two, which continued thru all the misfortunes of Shelley. Seven years later he accepted a position as clerk and correspondent of the East India Company. It seems remarkable that a man of his literary tastes, eccentric education and easy going habits should so successfully adapt himself to the routine of office work. For we know that at the age of twenty eight he was assigned to the responsible post of chief examiner of correspondence.

He held his office for forty years and distinguished himself by his strict and intelligent attention to duty and by the important part he took in the introduction of iron steamships to Eastern waters. ¹" In evidence before the commission of the House of Commons as to navigation of Indian rivers and trade routes to the East he is said to have shown his perfect mastery of these subjects." On his retirement with a pension of 1333 pounds, he was succeeded by John Stuart Mill.

March 20, 1820, Peacock was married to a lady whom he had met on one of his trips to Wales. Jane Gryffydd the "Beauty of Carnarvonshire" For thirty two years before her death Mrs Peacock was an invalid. Peacock bought a cottage at Lower Halliford on the Thames and his mother was virtually the head of the household on account of the illness of his wife and his business in London only permitting of week-end visits to his home. He had one son and three daughters.

Four years after the death of his wife he retired and for ten years lived at Lower Halliford, enjoying life, nature and his beloved books. January 23, 1866 he died at Lower Halliford. ²"Ignorant of the world as it is, circumscribed in his vision

1-Edinburgh Rev. Vol. 142, P 12

2-Contemporary Rev. Vol. 25

like all students of books,narrowed to the knowledge of a good library and a few green walks,thus Thomas Peacock passed away."
Friends.

Peacock,with all his geniality,had few friends and lived much apart from his fellows. The fact of his having had such a short school life as a boy without any university experience probably aided this tendency to exclusiveness. His intimate friends were Mr Hookham the publisher,in his early manhood. Later Shelley and Hogg were his chosen comrades,and when he was quite old he took great delight in the friendship of Lord Broughton. These two old men kept up a vigorous correspondence until Peacock's death.¹ The Fortnightly Review cites Charles Lamb as a friend of Peacock's and it is very probable that they were thrown together at the East India House. Robert Buchanan as a young man was a friend of Peacock's old age and paid him many visits of which he has written a delightful reminiscence.

The best known of the friendships of Peacock was that with Shelley. The men were so different in type and re-acted so,one upon the other,that the circumstances and influences of this friendship are worthy of consideration.

Shelley,to us,seems an extravagant and unconventional type.But the aristocratic Hogg says of him,²"I have had the happiness to associate with some of the best specimens of gentlemen - but I can affirm that Shelley was almost the only example I have yet found that was never wanting even in the most minute particular of the infinite and various observances of pure,entire and perfect gentility."

1-Fortnightly Rev. Vol. 20 P.189

2-Dowdens Life of Shelley,Vol. 1,P. 83

Perhaps these qualities of Shelley prompted the friendship of Peacock for him for Peacock had the instincts and habits of a true gentleman and no genuine congeniality could exist except with a kindred spirit.

That they were true friends we know, for the test of adversity was applied. After the death of Harriet Westbrook and Shelley's union with Mary Godwin many friends looked with coldness upon Shelley but "Peacock indeed, was friendly and faithful, and his friendship and help were grateful in this season of cold and death."¹

Again and again in Shelley's journals are references made to Peacock's calls, his familiar intercourse with the family, as informally dropping in to breakfast; and his loaning of money and visits to lawyers with Shelley for the adjustment of pecuniary difficulties.²

Evidently Peacock sympathised deeply with the first Mrs Shelley as a wronged woman and he has left a justification of Harriet Westbrook in his "Memoirs of Shelley",³ but from the journals of Shelley, Mary Godwin and her sister there are indubitable proofs of his constant aid to the Shelleys after the second marriage.

It is known that Peacock did not accept Shelley's philosophy and that he succeeded in placing a certain restraint upon his friends "lurid imagination". And he satirized his extravagances in the character of Scythrop in Nightmare Abbey. The influence of Peacock on Shelley's lurid genius was certainly chilling but beneficial and in the interests of art. He checked

1-Dowden's Life of Shelley Vol. 1. P.467

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CHAPTER I. THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA. The first discovery of America was made by Christopher Columbus in 1492. He sailed from Spain in search of a new route to the Indies, and discovered the continent of America.

CHAPTER II. THE SETTLEMENT OF AMERICA. The first settlement in America was made by the Spaniards in 1492. They established a colony in the island of Cuba, and later in the mainland. The English also established colonies in America, and the French and Dutch also had colonies.

CHAPTER III. THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE. The American colonies fought a war for independence from Great Britain in 1775. They won the war, and became the United States of America. The struggle for independence was a long and hard one, but the Americans finally won.

CHAPTER IV. THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICA. After the war for independence, the United States began to develop. The population grew, and the economy improved. The United States became a powerful nation, and its influence spread throughout the world.

CHAPTER V. THE PRESENT DAY. The United States is now a powerful nation, and its influence is felt throughout the world. It is a land of freedom and opportunity, and its people are proud of their country.

a thousand extravagances and helped to form Shelley's later and more massive style as exemplified in "Alastor or the Spirit of Solitude." Alastor or *Alastor* signifies evil genius and it is said that Peacock gained much quiet enjoyment from the general idea of the public that the title was merely a proper name.¹ But nevertheless, they were thoroly good friends, enjoyed many sail-boat trips together, and Peacock acted as Shelley's executor after the latters tragic death.

Personal Characteristics.

Robert Buchanan gives us a vivid picture of Thomas Love Peacock as an old man. In evry word we can detect his love and admiration for the genial old scholar. It is a fact that those who knew him personally portray a character in which "geniality, joviality, and epicurean enjoyment of life" predominate. It is only the critics who judge from his books alone who present a bitter, sarcastic and acrimonious disposition.

²"As I knew him-a stately old gentleman with hair as white as snow, a keen merry eye, and a characteristic chin. His dress was plain black, with white neck cloth, and low shoes and on his head he wore a plaited straw hat. One glance at him was enough to reveal his delightful character, that of his own Dr Opimiam." His tastes in fact were five; a good library, a good dinner, a pleasant garden, and rural walks." When Buchanan approaches the house on the occasion of his first visit he finds Peacock, a venerable old gentleman seated upon the lawn - guiding the uncertain reading of a young girl- who was translating Italian poetry, of which Peacock was very fond. Italian opera also was one of his favorite pastimes and even after his retirement to

1-Fortnightly Rev. Vol.20, P.90

2-Robert Buchanan - A Look Around Literature. P.165

Lower Halliford he would occasionally run up to London for a visit to the publisher and a night at the Italian opera.

We know comparatively little of Peacock except from deduction, but it is the belief of those who knew him best that he reveals himself in his books. The various scholarly persons who appear successively in his books culminating with the best of all Dr Opimiam might mirror their creator. He had a strong horror of being put in a book or Boswelized and his granddaughter's brief memoirs are the nearest approach to anything of the kind. His love for the classics was so great that that there seem to have been reflected certain "pagan qualities, among them a pagan kind of rectitude."¹ His paganism was graceful and jovial. It is even suspected that it would have been no great strain of conscience for him to have set up an altar to Bacchus or Jove and made his offerings and obeisance. An amusing story is told of his vehement exclamation to the curate on one occasion. It was during his last illness. Peacock had a great dread of fire and would allow no matches to be kept in the house with the exception of a few safely deposited in a tin box in the kitchen. In spite of his warnings and carefulness the house accidentally caught fire. Peacock was ill in bed but he refused to permit them to carry him away from his valued books. The curate attempted to persuade him to allow them to take him to a place of safety but he almost destroyed the churchman's equanimity by vehemently shouting "By the immortal gods, I will not move." Perhaps it was due to this dread of fire that Peacock's dislike of smoking was so strong. Robert Buchanan tells of many a stolen smoke during his visits to Peacock (but never daring to indulge in the presence of his host) Buchanan read in his friend's

1-Fortnightly Rev. Vol 20, P.189

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face gentleness, high mindedness, toleration and perfect chivalry. Odd words, he says, to apply to one whom the world knew as a retrograde philosopher, satirical pessimist rather than a lover of human nature, as a scholar rather than a poet, as a country gentleman of the old school rather than a humanitarian of the new. He had learned of the 18th century certain modest virtues which the 19th had forgotten. High minded courtesy, noble deference toward women, which is now to be seen in Robert Browning, was his in perfection. To children he was gentleness itself and all the children loved him. " To me Peacock seems an improved Addisonian type and although more cultivated and refined approaches our own Eugene Field in that characteristic gentleness and kindness toward children.

Every May-day he indulged in a pretty custom of crowning one of his own little relatives as Queen of the May, and the village children flocked in with garlands and each received a bright new penny from Peacock as a reward. His love of the old customs and pastimes of England never waned. In "Gryll Grange" Vol. II, Page 45, he makes Dr Opimiam voice his sentiments on the subject of observing the Christmas-time in the good old English way, "I myself think much of Christmas and all its associations.--- I like the idea of the Yule-log, the enormous block of wood carefully selected long before, and preserved where it would be thoroughly dry, which burned on the old-fashioned hearth.--- I like the festoons of holly on the walls and windows; the dance under the mistletoe; the gigantic sausage; the baron of beef; the vast globe of plum-pudding, the true image of the earth flattened at the poles; the tapping of the old October; the inexhaustible bowl of punch; the life and joy of the old hall when the 1-Littells Living Age - Vol. 126, P. 157.

squire and his household and his neighborhood were as one."

This seems his attitude toward the world - kindly, pleasure loving in a quiet way, and all Epicurean in his physical as well as literary tastes. Also in "Gryll Grange" he has accurately described himself, "He liked to dine well, and withal to dine quickly and to have quiet friends at his table with whom he could discuss questions which might afford ample room for pleasant conversation and none for acrimonious dispute."

"He had no fancy," he said, "for living in an express train, he liked to go quietly thru life and to see all that lay in his way."

His granddaughter, Edith Nicolls, seems to give the key to the character of the man in her sympathetic "Memoirs." "He was called by his most intimate friends the 'laughing philosopher' and it seems to me that the term 'Epicurean philosopher' which I have often heard applied to him describes him accurately and briefly. In public life my grandfather was upright and honorable but as he advanced in years his detestation of anything disagreeable made him simply avoid whatever fretted him, laughing off all sorts of ordinary calls upon his leisure time. His love of ease and kindness of heart made it impossible that he could be actively unkind to any one but he would not be worried and just got away from anything that annoyed him."

Instead of active pessimism and disturbing enmities and dislikes that some critics have read into his character from his books the real attitude is undoubtedly one of kindly tolerance toward the world. His perceptions were quick, his sense of the humorous and incongruous of the keenest and yet reading in the spirit in which Peacock wrote I believe we will detect only

the amused onlooker, humorously deriding the foibles of mankind, not an active partisan who is at all affected by the strife.

Peacock was a sincere lover of nature and took the greatest delight in out of door life. Some one has compared his life to a "long rural walk."¹ "He was venturesome almost to fool hardiness when he went to worship nature in her most savage moods." His admiration of beautiful scenery was intense and "as an oasis after wandering over an arid wilderness are his eloquent descriptions of scenery "especially of Welsh scenery of which he was especially fond."²

Literary Tastes.

Peacock was proficient in languages. All thru his life he was influenced by the classics and retained his early love for them. As a boy in school he was called "Greeky Peeky" because of his proficiency in Greek. Besides Greek and Latin, his knowledge of French and Italian was considerable but in spite of his pleasure in German authors he refused to learn German.³ "As he was nearing his eightieth year he began the study of Spanish so that he might read Autos and other masterpieces of Calderon in the original."

⁴His favorite classical authors were Aristophanes and Cicero. Aristophanes he reveled in, appreciating that ancient satire so akin to the keen writings of his own modern muse. His knowledge of Cicero was extraordinary, he knew all

¹Edinburgh Review Vol. 142

²- Ibid

³- Littell's Living Age Vol. 126.

⁴- Ibid

of the forcefull passages by heart." Peacock compared Dickens's Pickwick to Aristophanes and declared that Dickens was comic but not so comic as Aristophanes. In "Melincourt" he makes the characters produce and Aristophanic comedy.

¹
"His mind was not so much attracted by Greek tragedians, tho he knew them- as by comic writers and satirists.-- Comedy fascinated him more than tragedy awed him." Catullus and Petronius he enjoyed and Plautus.

His modern favorites among the French were Rabelais Moliere and Voltaire. in his satirical works. He was an admirer of Addison, Sir Roger de Coverly and the Spectator were well known to him. His studies of country life are similar in tone to Addison's. "Dean Swift's sardonic verses he knew by heart but he was not fond of Coleridge's transcendentalism." Buchanan says that Peacock could repeat the whole of "Redis Pacchus in Tuscany", a bibulous masterpiece which had been translated by Leigh Hunt. His drinking songs which are scattered thru his books are admirable

His favorite poet was Burns and in perfect keeping with all that he has written he preferred "Tam o' Shanter" to any of Burns's other poems. "He loved Wordsworth but had no appreciation for Keats. Shelley and Byron he satirises. His favorite non-poetical works are Monboddo's "Ancient Metaphysics", Drummond's "Academical questions", Took's "Diversions of Purly".

He had not read so many books but had about twelve authors virtually by heart.² He read and re-read them and thus, perhaps, unconsciously they became such a part of his mental equipment, so well assimilated that he used them more or less in all his works.

1- Littell's Living Age. Vol. 126

2 Ibid.

S T Y L E .

Peacock's style was formed upon classic models.

He is distinctly a classicist in purity and smoothness, definiteness and reserve. He possessed a keen sense of humor but common sense and sanity in expression are his watchwords.

His love of nature was very great and he displays lyric ability in his beautiful descriptions. Songs are scattered thru all his books and altho he attains no rank as a poet his folksongs and drinkingsongs are of no inferior quality. The lyric qualittied and double entendre of Catullus attracted Peacock; Plautus with his comedy situations and puns has had influence Aristophanes has been taken as a model and Horace and Cicero were favorites.

The subtle wit and satire of the French Rabelais, Moliere and Voltaire can be taken into consideration as of some effect upon Peacock's style. In places it is almost Addisonian, the descriptions of country life remind one of Sir Roger de Coverly.

His admiration and love for the 18th. century are reflected in his style but "It seems to us that Peacock's appreciation was too versatile to permit him to confine himself closely to any period or to any form either his thoughts, tastes or his style after any particular order of models. He reflects the variety of his favorite authors of every age, according to his changing moods or as the humor strikes him."¹

As Geo. Meredith describes Aristophanes "he is an aggregate of many men all of a certain greatness."²

1- Edinburgh Review Vol. 142 P. 63

2- George Meredith Essay on Comedy P. 67

this we can very well apply to Peacock.

"To touch and kindle the mind thru laughter, demands more than sprightliness, a most subtle delicacy. A corresponding acuteness¹ must exist to welcome him".

The erudition of Peacock was so profound, his classical allusions so plentiful and his wit so quick and subtle that his writings instead of delighting puzzle the minds of the general reader. There are commonplace touches thruout but jest and earnest are inextricably intertwined and Peacock so plays with the convictions of the reader that the mind is compelled to perform a series of mental gymnastics to keep in sympathy with him.

"It is a spirit of frolic exaggeration in which the characters are conceived- each a walking epitome of all that is absurd in himself.---The tone of decided tho refined caricature that runs thru the whole unite to set grave remonstrance at defiance.--- And while the imagination is thus forced into the current of his humor, the taste is charmed by a refinement of manners and by a classical purity of style which carries all sense of coarseness² away. Each of Peacock's characters is a caricature,- a type figure. He leaves no question as to this point by the nomenclature he employs. He places a distinguishing mark upon each one and makes him live, act and talk consistently with his name.

Squire Headlong of Headlong Hall is significant in connection with the uproar and confusion attendant upon the doughty squire's presence in any company. Sir Oran Hantton is

1- George Meredith's Essay on Comedy.

2- Edinburgh Review. Vol. 68 P. 443

the name of one of the quaintest conceits in names, transferring Orang outang into a French bon mot. The suitors of Miss Gryll, form a varied company, Mr. Ballott, a politician, Mr. En Avant, of French significance, Mr. Long Owen, unfortunately in debt, and Lord Curryfin, interested in a study of fish. Mr. Mc Quedy, the Scotch economist of Crochet Castle fame is made up of Mac Q. E. D. Mr. Glowry presents the melancholy type in "Nightmare Abbey" and named his only son Scythrop from the Greek, σκυθρωπος, meaning of a sullen countenance. The examples of this eccentricity in nomenclature are almost as many as the characters. It is not a pleasant habit of the author, altho it may be significant. To real character developement Peacock pays little or no attention. There are a few terse characterizations scattered thru his books. In "Gryll Grange" the four words "Mrs. Opimiam was domestic"¹ completely characterize the lady - in the same book a successful old maid is described - "Miss Ilex, an elderly spinster, was everywhere welcome, being always good humored, agreeable in conversation, having much knowledge of society, on most subjects an opinion of her own, for which she had always something to say."²

In a few words Squire Headlong is sketched, "He had little idea of gradation; he saw no interval between the first step and the last, but pounced upon his object with the impetus of a mountain cataract. This rapidity of movement, indeed, subjected him to some disaster which cooler spirits would have escaped. He was an excellent sportsman, and almost always killed

1- Gryll Grange Vol. 1 P. 31

2- Ibid

his game; but now and then he killed his dog¹. But as a rule the characters reveal themselves by conversation. Peacock follows the form of comedy, in fact his "Maid Marian" was so successful and adapted itself so well to stage purposes that it was dramatized by Planché¹ with music by Bishop and produced at Covent Garden under Chas. Kemble's auspices, the raciness and sparkle attracted the public. "Nightmare Abbey"² is a comedy in everything except name,- it has all the possibilities and "The Misfortunes of Elphin" would adapt itself well to dramatization. Peacock's plots are of the simplest, he makes no attempt at construction but develops by dialog. "In the first two, "Headlong Hall" and "Melincourt", the whole story might be so taken away as to leave a series of separate dialogs scarcely injured by the change. In "Nightmare Abbey" the successive situations which form the story, bring out the humor of character and in "Maid Marian" and "Crochet Castle" the interest lies in a sort of running commentary on the action; which would lose its meaning if the scene and story were taken away³."

If he were not carried away by his erudition; love of quotation and dissertation his books would be racy dialogs and comedy situations. As it is, while these allusions please a few scholars to whom they are plain, the great number of readers are confused and made to feel their inferiority. But Peacock did not seek for popular favor, in fact, he made it a point never to miss an opportunity of satirically alluding

1- Headlong Hall P. 114

2- Contemporary Review Vol. 25 P. 733
Edinburgh Review Vol. 68

to literary men whom he suspected of doing it. He was financially independent even before he took the East India House position and there was no occasion for catering to the public.

Peacock was a sincere lover of nature and the vivid descriptions interspersed thru his works are the only parts upon which we safely place our confidence in the real feeling and sincerity of the writer. Peacock possessed a tenacious memory and in the "The Misfortunes of Elphin" he has described with a wealth of detail the Welsh scenery thru which he traveled.¹ In the same book he writes vividly of a storm and closes with the following, "It was one of those tempests which occur once in several centuries, and which, by their extensive devastations, are chronicled to eternity; for a storm which signalises its course with extraordinary destruction, becomes as worthy of celebration as a hero for the same reason."²

At times Peacock approaches a high plane in his love and reverence for nature. He reveals his feelings toward society thru the speech of Mr. Forrester, "³In a state of society so corrupted as that in which we live, the best instructors and companions are ancient books; and these are best studied in those congenial solitudes where the energies of nature are most pure and uncontrolled, and the aspect of eternal things recalls in some measure the departed glory of the world." But perhaps the finest passage of all is the speech of the friar in answer to the Baron's remark; "I am in fine company" "In the very best

1- Page 137

2- Page 39. M. of E.

3- Melincourt Page 142

of company," said the friar, "in the high court of nature, and in the midst of her own nobility. Is it not so? This goodly grove is our palace; the oak and the beech are its colonnade and its canopy; the sun and the moon and the stars are its everlasting lamps; the may-flower and the woodbine and the eglantine and the ivy are its decorations, its curtains and its tapestry; the lark, and the thrush, and the linnet, and the nightingale, are its unhired minstrels and musicians."

He indulges in his lyric vein and in his best style when the influences and beauties of nature are the subject of discussion. "Maid Marian" is instinct with the beauty, the charm and the joyousness of out-of-door life. Sherwood Forest, under his sympathetic pen, becomes a place of freedom and delight to which the reader longs to retreat for a season.

Peacock altho his books are classed as novels is essentially a writer of comedy. The plots are simple in structure the characters reveal themselves by dialog-racy, sharp repartee and slow learned discussion as the case seems to demand,- they resort to plays on words and pun making in an almost Shakesperean manner.

Peacock's sense of the ridiculous is strong and the farcical situations which he introduces thruout his works form no small part of the comic element. If, as Meredith says, the test of true comedy is that it shall awaken thoughtful laughter, then our author is definitely classed. In "Gryll Grange" Peacock refers to the wedding speech of Dr. Optimiam as the "epilog of our comedy." This remark surely gives the keynote of his own conception of his work.¹

"Peacock's humor is never coarse or indecent.

It is the humor of a scholar, a poet and above all a man of letters." Lord Houghton says Peacock expresses the "spirit of an elder time before all the sherry was dry and all the ale bitter, and when men of thought were not ashamed of being merry.¹" He also possesses the "Art of sweetly laughing satire, altho he deals hard hits yet he is refined and sprightly,- a mixture of originality, gathered wit and wisdom. His philosophy is one that never bores."² Dr. Opimiam expresses the philosophy of the old scholar in his advice to Harry Hedgerow, "Whatever happens in this world, never let it spoil your dinner⁴," and again the easy going old gentleman of 18th. century tastes in his practical admonitions,³ "Live in hope; but live on beef and ale."

The reader is impressed thruout all of Peacock's books with the unusually prominent place assigned to the process of eating and drinking. "A good dinner" is the delight of all and wine the panacea for every misfortune whether it be a broken heart, a delay in a journey, or the loss of an argument. "The desire of Dinner in these novels, the one touch of nature that makes the whole world kin; the one thing good for man, all the days of his vain life he spendeth as a shadow, on which all philosophers agree, the one thing which abides with him of his labor. All conflicting theories shake hands at the sound of the dinner-bell. All controversies, however divergent, where the disputants are growing ever hotter and wider asunder as they proceed, strangely converge and meet in the common center of the

1- Contemporary Review Vol. 25 P. 762

2- Ibid P. 734

3- Gryll Grange P. 126-127.

4- Ibid.

dinner table." ¹ His humor consists in little hits, as, for instance the dissertation on carving- the comedy of which will surely appeal to men of all ages who have observed or participated in the operation. "There is hardly one gentleman in twenty who knows how to carve; and as to ladies, though they did know once on a time, they do not now. What can be more pitiable than the right handman of the lady of the house awkward enough in himself, with the dish twisted around to him in the most awkward position, digging in unutterable mortification for a joint which he cannot find, and wishing the unatomisable volaille ² behind a Russian screen with the footmen?" And again, the quaint conceit and hit at the prevailing habit of drinking. In describing the preparations for the ball at Headlong Hall " Bacchus of course was not forgotten by the male part of the assembly (with them, indeed, a ball was invariably a scene of tipsy dance and jollity); the servants flew about with wine and negus, and the little butler was indefatigable with his corkscrew, which is reported on one occasion to have become so hot under the influence of perpetual friction that it actually set fire to the cork."

During Peacock's time "punning" was surely not considered so reprehensible as at present or our author insisted upon his eighteenth century prerogative, for his sly hits enliven page after page. Mr. Mc Borrowdale, commenting on the skating of Lord Curryfin ⁴ "I should be very glad to cut eights

1- Edinburgh Review Vol. 68.

2- Gryll Grange P. 115
Headlong Hall P. 135

4- Gryll Grange Vol. 2 Page 33.

and nines with his lordship, but the only figure I should cut, would be that of as many feet as would measure my own length on the ice." In one chapter of this same book it pleases Peacock to have Dr. Opimiam discourse learnedly on the subject of hair as indispensable to beauty,—"A bald Venus!" he exclaims, "It is as manifest a contradiction in terms as hot ice, or black snow."

Seithenyn, the famous originator of the motto gwin o eur- or wine from gold- the prime minister who drinks in and out of season when warned by Taliesin of the danger to the country as the level of the seas is altered and an overflow is imminent, blithely remarks. "Who ever heard of such a thing as altering the level of the sea.--- I see a very ugly reflection of your very good-looking face in the bowl of wine before you. Alter the level of that; drink up the reflection!"¹

Another hard hit at British phlegm when, in the midst of the storm and rain, Peacock comments thus upon the awkward attempt of the hero at conversation, "The loud dashing of the sea and blustering of the wind supplied him with what has been, since Britain was Britain, the alpha and omega of British conversation. He said, "It seems a stormy night."

Another quaint proverb of his has come down to us,³
"When the wine is in, the brain is out."

Also Mr. Cranium's clever terms of speech in the course of his lecture on skulls. "Here is the skull of an illustrious robber, who, after a long and triumphant process of depredation and murder, was suddenly checked in his career by

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| 1- Misfortunes of Elphin | P. 31 |
| Ibid | P. 37 |
| 3- Headlong Hall | P. 127 |

means of a certain quality inherent in preparations of hemp,¹ which, for the sake of perspicuity, I shall call suspensiveness!" It is such unexpected twists in serious conversations which undoubtedly made Peacock chuckle as he wrote them.

As a fitting finale to a unanimous apostrophe to the flowing bowl - each one "filling" as he speaks - Mr. Hilary cries out, "It is the only symbol of perfect life. The inscription "Hic non bibitur" will suit nothing but a tombstone."² And the very essence of a disturbed mind is revealed in the following; "He dined alone, and drank a bottle of Madeira, as if it had been so much water."³ Such was the conviviality of Peacock's characters- eighteenth century personages as they are for who in the busy nineteenth has the leisure to spend half the days and nights in philosophical discussions enlivened by copious draughts of the host's good wine?"

The plots are exceedingly conventional, usually laid in a country house- with a party of assorted guests who talk, eat and drink continuously. But the author has used some art and dramatic skill in producing comedy situations. "Maid Marian" is replete with them- after a rousing description of the interruption of the earl's and Matilda's marriage, Peacock descends to farce- "The earl's bowmen at the door sent in among the assailants a volley of arrows one of which whizzed past the ear of the abbot, who in mortal fear of being translated from a ghostly friar into a friarly ghost, began to roll out of

1- Headlong Hall P. 142

2- Nightmare Abbey P. 98

3Gryll Grange Vol. 1 P. 99

Maid Marian P. 18

the chapel as fast as his bulk and holy robes would permit, roaring "Sacrilege!" with all his monks at his heels, who were, like himself, more intent to go at once than to stand upon the order of their going. The abbot, thus pressed from behind, and stumbling over his own drapery before, fell suddenly prostrate in the doorway that connected the chapel with the abbey, and was instantaneously buried under a pyramid of ghostly carcasses, that fell over him and each other, and lay a rolling chaos of animated rotundities, sprawling and bawling in unseemly disarray and sending forth the names of all the saints in and out of heaven.¹

The singing bout between Matilda and the friar² amidst the expostulations of the baron is truly comic. And again the outwitting of the abbot by the bowmen of Sherwood and the poor man's heavy payment for his dinner and sacrifice of his cloak- appeals to the humorous instincts of the reader.

Robin's rescue of young Allen's bride from the gouty old knight whom she is being forced to marry develops into another comic situation when Robin sits in the church porch, plays his harp and forces the gouty old knight and rotund bishop to dance in the midst of a ring of foresters- with the prick of an arrow as a reminder of relaxation.³ A comedian in comic opera could be no more comic than Seithenyn when invited to return to his wife and daughter from whom he has been

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| 1- Maid Marian | P. 20 |
| 2- Ibid | P. 51 |
| 3- Ibid | P. 126 |

separated for many years. "Very likely" said Seithonyn, "and I should be very glad to see them all; but I am afraid King Elphin as you call him, would do me a mischief. At any rate, he would stint me in liquor. No! If they will visit me here I am. Fish, and water will not agree with me. I am growing old and need more cordial treatment!"¹ Headlong Hall is rich with situations that provoke laughter. The serio-comic descriptions of Squire Headlong's precipitation into the lake and his record of the event in his pocket book as "Mem. Swallowed two or three pints of water,"² is a touch of comedy, while the Squire's precipitate acquiescence in Mr. Milestone's scheme of improving the scenery by blowing up the cliff and the attendant circumstances of poor Mr. Cranium's fright and fall from the tower into the water below is an example of his sense of the extremely ridiculous.³

In "nightmare Abbey, on Mr. Flosky's assertion that he sees a real ghost and the, to him, unexpected apparition at the very moment and consequent panic which ensues is a situation to delight the gallery. "Mr. Flosky, familiar as he was with ghosts, was not prepared for this apparition, and made the best of his way out at the opposite door. Mrs. Hilary and Marionetta followed screaming. The Honorable Mr. Listless, by two turns of his body, rolled first off the sofa and then under it. The Reverend Mr. Larynx leaped up and fled

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| 1- Misfortunes of Elphin | P. 104 |
| 2- Headlong Hall | P. 116 |
| 3- Ibid | P. 117 |
| 4- Ibid | |
| 5- Nightmare Abbey. | P. 114 |

with so much precipitation, that he overturned the table on the foot of Mr. Glowry. Mr. Glowry roared with pain in the ear of Mr. Toobad. Mr. Toobad's alarm so bewildered his senses that, missing the door, he threw up one of the windows, jumped out in his panic, and plunged over head and ears in the moat.¹"

So Peacock descends to farce and mingles with his racy dialog and erudite discussions situations of a purely farcical character.

S A T I R E

"Moliere followed the Horatian precept, to observe the manners of his age and give his characters the color befitting them at the time."

¹So Peacock influenced by both Moliere and Horace , with his quickness of observation seized upon the foibles of the people of his time and held then up to ridicule. He ridicules science but knows the full value of it. He himself was an authority on navigation in the East. "He was nearly as knock down in his depreciation as Macaulay in his eulogism of progress and reform."²

³Robert Buchanan explains the attitude of this man of culture and refinement. " Peacock was no friend to modern progress, the cant of it hoarsely roared from the throats of journalistic Jews and political Merry Andrews had sickened him and he would not admit that the world was one whit wiser and happier than before the advent of the steam engine." We can imagine the disgust the honorable old gentleman felt at the political abuses of the time. With his strict pagan ideas of right and his idealistic conceptions of government - his sensibilities must have been shocked many times.

"In his own political views he must have been ardently progressive - liberal in the highest sense of the word. He would be as opposed to a Whig job as to a conservative monop-

1-An Essay on Comedy. G. Meredith.

2-George Saintsbury, English Prose.

3-Littell's Living Age. Vol. 126

SECRET

1. The purpose of this document is to provide information regarding the activities of the [redacted] and the [redacted] in the [redacted] area.

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oly. The deep rooted conviction he had of the rights of man , the individual, caused him to loathe injustice in whatever quarter it was perceived.¹ In his literary convictions he is emphatically eighteenth century. The keynote is "common sense" as opposed to the wild romanticism of the age in which he lived. He advocates the policy of "let well alone" and is truly no friend of modern progress. Because he was a gentleman of the eighteenth century he loved the writers of the past, their attitude was his - he idealized the virtues of the century preceding him and could see no benefit in the noisy rush of reformers.

Greed for money is a fit subject for satire and Peacock makes it the subject of "Crotchet Castle"- A prominent banker absconds to America leaving a beautiful daughter in England. Around this girl the story is woven and with her, alone, does Peacock deal gently - it is said that she is drawn from the memory of his first love. Dr Folliott is a typical character of English fiction but all the others are held up to ridicule by their excesses and exaggerations. Competitive examinations he considered useless. Dr Opimian says about them "I saw some examination papers the other day which would have infallibly excluded Marlborough from the army and Nelson from the navy. Fancy Watt being asked how much Joan of Naples got for Avignon when she sold it to Pope Clement the Sixth and being held unfit for an engineer because he could not answer²." He gives some hard knocks at the science of political economy. Lord Curryfin - remarks that thru the whole period we have had some fine specimens of nonsense on the subject of political economy.³ In treating of the education of Taliesin in the "Misfortunes of Elphin"

1-Gryll Grange Vol.1, P.138.
 2-Ibid.
 3-Fortnightly Rev. P.189.

Peacock thus comments; "As Taliesin grew up Gwythno instructed him in all the knowledge of the age, which was, of course not much in comparison with ours. The science of political economy was sleeping in the womb of time. The advantage of growing rich by getting into debt and paying interest was altogether unknown¹." In discussing the sudden and undignified departure of Mr Touch and Go with all the ready money of his bank; Peacock remarks- "As to his running away that is a minor consideration: I have always understood from Mr Mac Quedy who is a great oracle in this way, that promises to pay ought not to be kept; the essence of a safe and economical currency being an interminable series of broken promises²." He combines a political and competitive hit in the following conversation - Dr Opimiam - "We have an honorable gentleman under competitive examination for a degree in legislative wisdom." Mr Mac Borrowdale - "Truly that is fooling competition to the top of its bent." Dr O. - Competitive examination for clerks and none for legislators, is not this an anomaly? Mr Mac B. "Eh but he is being subjected to a pretty severe competitive examination of his own by what they call a constituency, who just put him to the test in the art of conjuring, to see if he can shift money from his own pocket into theirs, without any inconvenient third party being aware of the transfer." Rather a clever description of "graft."

"Maid Marian" and the "Misfortunes of Elphin" are really political allegories, travesties on governmental policies. And the scene of the chairing of the representatives from one Vote borough as described in Melincourt is exquisite satire and comedy. Sir Oran Hautton the dumb barronet being one of the representatives, carries out his part of the "wisdom of 1-Misfortunes of Elphin P. 61. 2-Crochet Castle, P. 163

silence" very well until he looks with disgust upon the ceremony of "chairing" and returns to his aboriginal method of remonstrance and lays around him diligently and effectively with his staff. The satire on representation was not as ludicrous as true for the condition at One Vote and No Vote was really exemplified at Old Sarum. Mr Sarcastic the other member of Parliament makes a telling speech on virtual representation to the citizens of Novote." The honorable Baronet and myself being the actual representatives of the fat burgess of Onevote, shall be virtual representatives of the worthy citizens of Novote, and you may rely on it gentlemen (with his hand on his heart) we shall always be deeply attentive to your interests, when they happen, as no doubt they sometimes will, to be perfectly compatible with our own¹." In "Maid Marian his purpose is somewhat different. The satire is carefully veiled - the delight in nature, the joy of living and interest in the adventures of the denizens of Sherwood almost conceal the underlying vein of satire.

"To exhibit the inconsistency of the popular theory of legitimate government by gravely applying it to the case reversed is the idea with which he sets out. That legitimate authority always means the authority of the stronger party and that the common principle of all governments is to keep what they have and catch what they can, are his cardinal maxims assumed in silent gravity. His idea is to be worked out by drawing such a picture of freebootery as may raise it to the level of Kingcraft²."

1-Melincourt Vol. 2, P. 23.

2-Edinburg Rev. Vol. 68, P. 456.

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Peacock happily sets forth¹ their principles in the description of the freebooters' life. " So Robin and Mariam dwelt and reigned in the forest ,ranging the glades and greenwoods from the matins of the lark to the vespers of the nightingale, and administering natural justice according to Robin's ideas of rectifying the inequalities of human condition;raising genial dews from the bags of the rich and idle, and returning them in fertilizing showers on the poor and industrious:an operation which more enlightened statesmen have happily reversed to the unspeakable benefit of the community at large." The "Misfortunes of Elphin" is an exception in respect to the interest of the reader in incidents. These are borrowed - taken directly from ancient Welsh traditions. In this book more than any of the others Peacock gives free rein to his satire upon office holders. He dismisses the character of the king Gwythno in a few words.² "Gwythno like other Knigs, found the business of governing too light a matter to fill up the vacancy of either his time or his head, and took to the more solid pursuits of harping and singing; not forgetting feasting in which he was glorious; nor hunting wherein he was mighty." Coming to the one next in rank the author introduces the jester of the comedy, Prince Senhenyn, called at times, the Cambrian Falstaff. He was Lord High Commissioner of the Royal Embankment - that is he had charge of the watch towers and men who guarded against the first approach of decay. "He executed his office as a personage so denominated might be expected to do: he drank the profits, and left the embankment to his deputies, who left it to their assistants, who left it to itself."²

1-Introduction (Lady Charlotte Guest's Translation of Mabinogion
2-Misfortunes of Elphin, P. 20

Seithenyn was informed by Teithrin a faithful watch man, of the rapid decay of the embankment. Deep in his cups as usual Seithenyn makes a famous defence - propounding Peacock's own "statu quo policy!" "Decay" said Seithenyn "is one thing and danger is another. Evrything that is old must decay. That the embankment is old I am free to confess; that it is somewhat rotten in parts I will not altogether deny; that it is any worse for that I most sturdily gainsay - - - Cup-bearer fill. Our ancestors were wiser than we: they built it in their wisdom; and if we should be so rash as to try to mend it, we should only mar it. --- But, I say the parts that are rotten give elasticity to those that are sound: they give them elasticity. If it were all sound it would break by its own obstinate stiffness; the soundness is checked by the rottenness, and the stiffness is balanced by the elasticity. There is nothing so dangerous as innovation. --- It is well: it works well: let well alone. Cup-bearer fill. It was half rotten when I was born, and that is a conclusive reason why it should be three parts rotten when I die¹." And then Peacock's delightful irony when he comments on the present system of government. "We who live in more enlightened times, amidst the gigantic strides of intellect when offices of public trust are so conscientiously and zealously discharged, and so vigilantly checked and superintended, may wonder at the wicked negligence of Seithenyn; - - - happy that our own public guardians are too virtuous to act or talk like Seithenyn and that we ourselves are too wise not to perceive and too free not to prevent it, if they should be so disposed."²

1-Misfortunes of Elphin, P. 30.

2-Ibid. P. 55.

His satire lightly touches upon a number of less important topics. He has rather a decided feeling against reviewers and literary men whom he believes to be writing for public favor. In "Gryll Grange" he refers to the "meeting of the Pantopragmatic Society, under the presidency of Lord Facing-both-ways and the vice presidency of Lord Michlin Malicho," and at various time contemptuous remarks are flung at them.¹ Richard Garnett cites the Pautopragmatic Society as satirizing the National Association for the promotion of Social Science. The coined word probably means officiousness in all things, from Peacocks remarks about the members and the unpleasant social impertinence of the would-be meddlers with evrything.²

Apparently Peacock had a low estimate of America. When Mr Touch-and-go departs for America, Peacock reports the country as a refuge for the criminal class, and Dr Opimiam discourses emphatically against America. "On the whole our intercourse with America has been little else than ~~an~~ interchange of vices and disease"--"I hold as some have done before me that the human mind degenerates in America, and that the superiority, such as it is, of the white race, is only kept up with intercourse with Europe³.--- Lord Curryfin "You look at America doctor through your hatred of slavery! And this was the key to Peacock's apparent contempt for America.

His attitude toward the colleges and universities is rather hostile, toward the church is neutral altho he indulges in much good humored satire at the expense of his parsons. Dr Folliott and Dr Opimiam are the most genial of these worldly prelates. The spiritual side is neglected but a scholarly

1-Gryll Grange, 164.

2-Ibid Vol. 2, P. 118.

3-Ibid Vol. 2, P. 129.

erudition is affected which ³⁴in nowise prevents thoro enjoyment of good society, a good dinner and good wine.

As mentioned before, Peacock's style is classic as opposed to the romantic so much in vogue at the time he wrote. He possessed a singularly sane, well-balanced mind and a healthy body. He had no sympathy with the exaggerated emotions, mysteries, and oversensitiveness affected by his contemporaries.

Dr F.H.Hedge has defined the romantic as "Something very subtle undefinable, but felt by all. If we analyze the feeling we shall find it has its origin in wonder and mystery. It is the sense of something hidden, of imperfect revelation." ¹ To Peacock the rhapsodies of the mystics, transcendentalists and romanticists were just so much bombast and he uses their own language in holding them up to public ridicule.

"Nightmare Abbey suggests Gothic mystery by its very name; the egoism, hyper-aesthesia and susceptibility of Shelley is cited unmistakably in the character of Scythrop; the mysticism, indefiniteness and aspiration of Colridge is brought out by several transcendental characters but especially by Mr Flosky; the mystery, gloom and sensationalism of Byron, by Mr Cypress. "Nightmare Abbey" as a whole is a study directed against the romantic movement and the romanticists for whom Peacock had no fellow feeling.

Rousseau's influence on Peacock is noticeable. Much like Rousseau's attempt at the education of "Emile" and his summons "Back to Nature" is Peacock's study of the "Natural Man" as created in Sir Oran Hautton.

But whether in "Nightmare Abbey" "Melincourt" or any other of his nine books - the author misses no opportunity - Atlantic Monthly, March - 1886.

tunity to emphatically place before the reader his utter disregard for the romantic school.

L I T E R A R Y S A T I R E

"Romanticism", says Victor Hugo, so many times poorly defined, is nothing else than liberalism in literature. "Liberalism in literature is a product of the Nineteenth Century, therefore Peacock's protest is against the nineteenth century literature. Scott is the shining light, the culmination of the romantic school. Toward him all the lines of the romantic revival converge. He was never subtle, morbid or fantastic and had no niceties or secrets. He first and he alone popularized romance. With the "Lay of the Last Minstrel" romanticism came of age and entered on its career of triumph. Shakespeare dramatised history, Scott romanticised it.¹" When Scott is most popular Peacock publishes Crotchet Castle and makes Dr. Folliot express the most adverse opinion to Scott. He compares Scott's works to the Covent Garden pantomime. "They are both one he asserts, with a slight difference. The one is the literature of pantomime, the other is the pantomime of literature. --- The main difference is, that the one set of amusing fiction is told in music and action, the other in all the worst dialects of the English language. As to any one sentence worth remembering, any moral or political truth, anything having a tendency, however remote, to make men wiser or better, to make men think, to make them even think of thinking, they are both precisely alike "ne quaquam".

1-Beer's Romance of Nineteenth Century.

My quarrel with Scott is that his works contain nothing worth quoting, and a book that furnishes no quotations is no judice, no book, it is a plaything, mere amusement.¹ In this straightforward manner he attacks Scott but he satirises Shelley as Scythrop in "Nightmare Abbey". Colridge as Flosky, the transcendentalist, Southey as Mr Sackbut and Lord Byron as Mr Cypress.

Nightmare Abbey is a complete satire on the romantic school. The aspect of the abbey is funereal, the master Mr Glowry a gloomy misanthrope, the son Scythrop a true son of such a father and the product of a home atmosphere of sorrow and grief. "This son Scythrop becomes troubled with the passion for reforming the world and meditates on the practicability of reviving a confederation of regenerates. He plays transcendentalist madman to the top of his bent?" After Scythrop's first disappointment in love he sought the solitude of Nightmare Abbey. There was a tower at the end of the terrace "ruinous and full of owls. Here would Scythrop take his evening seat on a fallen fragment of mossy stone with his back resting against the ruined wall - a thick canopy of ivy with an owl in it, over his head, - and the Sorrows of Werther in his hand - - - He began to devour romances and German tragedies, and by the recommendation of Mr Flosky (the transcendentalist) to pore over ponderous tomes of transcendental philosophy, which reconciled him to the labor of studying them by their mystical jargon and necromantic imagery. In the congenial solitude of Nightmare Abbey the distempered ideas of metaphysical romance and romantic metaphysics had ample time and space to germinate into a fertile crop of chimeras, which rapidly shot up into vigorous and abundant

vegetation.

1-Crochet Castle.

2-Fortnightly Review.

He now became troubled with the passion for reforming the world."

To arouse the world he wrote a book "in which his meanings are carefully wrapt up in the monks hood of transcendental technology", which was expected to startle the world, but only seven copies were sold. Seven as a mystical number brot comfort to his wounded pride.

Scythrop indulges his emotions, works imaginatively upon his own sensibilities until he acts at times with the extravagances of insanity. He was susceptible to a degree and being thrown into the company of his cousin Marionetta O'Carrol an arrant little flirt, for the second time he falls in love. Sentimental and high flown romance are dealt with in no gentle manner by Peacock. Observe the absolute ludicrousness of the description. "He threw himself at her knees, devoured her hand with kisses and breathed a thousand vows in the most passionate language of romance. Marionetta sensibly but somewhat crushingly responds. "Prithee, deliver thyself like a man of this world." "The levity of this quotation and the manner in which it was delivered jarred so discordantly on the high wrought enthusiam of the romantic inamorato, that he sprung upon his feet, and beat his forehead with his clenched fists;²" Alas, for the shades of Werther and the passionate heroes of romance; thus searchingly does Peacock turn his cool philosopher's gaze upon him.

Soon the author with an exaggeration of romantic style that deserves quotation, introduces a stranger into Scythrop's life. Mystery envelops her, beauty is her portion - there is nothing left for Scythrop but to succumb to her influence

"The eyes of the stranger alone were visible.

1- Nightmare Abbey, P. 29

2- Ibid P.35

All the rest of the figure was muffled in the folds of a black cloak, which was raised by the right hand to the level of the eyes. This scrutiny being completed the stranger dropping the cloak said, "I see by your physiognomy that you may be trusted "; and revealed to the astonished Scythrop a female form of dazzling grace and beauty, with long flowing hair of raven blackness, and large black eyes of almost oppressive brilliancy, which strikingly contrasted with a complexion of snowy whiteness'. The stranger gives the name of Stella and throws herself upon the protection of the young man who proffers it upon the honor of a 'transcendental eleutherarch'. Thereupon she is concealed in secret rooms in the tower and the French element 'Femme incomprise' the woman unconventional and uncomprehended in the eyes of the world is presented. Stella is emotional but philosophical, she is a kindred spirit, Shelleyesque in her philosophy. "I am like yourself, a lover of freedom, and I carry my theory into practice. They alone are subject to blind authority who have no reliance on their own strength." Poor Scythrop is torn between two emotions - his passion for Stella and his love for Marionetta, he conceals the existence of each from the other and at the inevitable denouement and discovery- he is distracted by his emotional uncertainty and loses both of them. Peacock describes the reaction after this stormy scene- "The whole party followed, with the exception of Scythrop who threw himself into his chair, crossed his left foot over his right knee, placed the ball of his right thumb against his right temple, curved the forefinger along the upper part of his forehead, rested the point of the middle finger on the bridge of his nose and the points of the two others on the lower part of the

1- Nightmare Abbey P. 29

palm, fixed his eyes intently on the veins in the back of left hand, and sat in this position like the immovable Theseus. --- We hope the admirers of the minutiae in poetry and romance will appreciate this accurate description of a pensive attitude.¹ "

The remarkable thing about the satire of Scythrop in "Nightmare Abbey" is Shelley's own attitude toward it. Shelley recognized his own portrait. In 1811, in Scotland, Shelley married Harriet Westbrook, on March 24th, 1814 the marriage was re-solemnized in London. July 28th., of the same year he deserted her, leaving England with Mary Godwin, the daughter of Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft. Two years later Harriet Westbrook drowned herself and Shelley immediately married Mary Godwin. In 1819, only three years later and while society still looked with censure upon Shelley - he reads "Nightmare Abbey" and wrote to Peacock of his appreciation of the character of Scythrop.

The incidents of Scythrop's love affairs are very similar, with the important exception that Shelley gained, while Scythrop lost, both women. There is no mistaking the model and, one of two things must be true to account for Shelley's attitude in the matter. Either he was so imbued with his own philosophy that he believed himself guiltless of any actual wrong-doing in breaking thru the bonds of conventionality or he trusted so implicitly in Peacock's faithful friendship that he realized that nothing that Peacock wrote could be with malicious intent but merely prompted by his keen appreciation of the possibility of satire in the situation.

Of the minor characters, Byron is satirised as Mr. Cypress. Truly Byronic is this bit of conversation. "Sir,
1- Nightmare Abbey P. 124

I have quarreled with my wife; and a man who has quarreled with his wife is absolved from all duty to his country. I have an ode to tell the people as much, and they may take it as they list." ¹ and later he says; "I have no hope for myself or for others. Our life is a false nature;----- hired from the first to the last by phantoms - love, fame, ambition, avarice - all idle, and all ill - one meteor of smny names, that vanishes in the smoke of death."

In France, Romanticism was carried much farther than in England. Victor Hugo had a real following, a school. The French youth exemplified their revolutionary literary ideas by their dress and Beers says that the rolling Byronic collar-well opened at the throat, was much affected by romantic young people.

"The young enthusiasts of le petit cénacle carried their Byronism so far that in imitation of the celebrated revels at Newstead, they used to drink from a human skull." ³ Peacock does not neglect this phase of the subject. In "Nightmare Abbey," the elder Glowry has a punch-bowl made of his ancestor's skull and Scythrop uses it most dramatically when he presents himself before his father with it in his hand and threatens instant suicide if the father refuses consent to his marriage with Marionetta. In terror Mr. Glowry consents and Scythrop marches away and drinks the Madeira with which it has been filled - a comic anti-climax such as Peacock

1- Nightmare Abbey P. 100

2- Childe Harold Canto 4

3- Beer's Nineteenth Century Romanticism.

usually resorts to after after the tragic scenes.

Next to his satiric treatment of Scythrop and his slight arraignment of Mr Cypress the author considers most fully, Mr Flasky, the transcendentalist. This type is a favorite with Peacock. Moly Mystic of "Melincourt", Skionar of "Crotchet Castle" and Flosky of "Nightmare Abbey" are the same type but differing in degree. With the greatest gravity Mr Mystic defines transcendentalism with the aid of a mirror and sphere. "This sphere" said he, "is an oblong spheroid in the perception of the cylindrical mirror; as long as the mirror thot that the object of his perception was the real external oblong spheroid, he was a mere empirical philosopher; but he has grown wise since he has been in my library; and by reflecting very deeply on the degree in which the manner of his construction might influence the forms of his perception, has taken a very opaque and tenebrious view of how much of the spheroidical perception belongs to the object, which is the sphere, and and how much to the subject which is himself, in his quality of cylindrical mirror. He has thus discovered the differences between objective and subjective reality; and this point of view is transcendentalism."

"A very dusky and fuliginous speculation indeed," said Mr Fox contemplating Mr Mystic in his own phase¹." Thus Peacock affronts the brotherhood by the use of their own language - mystifying as it is.

In "Crotchet Castle" Mr Skionar discusses fully as logically in his conversation with Mr Mac Quedy, the blunt Scotch economist. Mr Skionar "Transcendentalism is the philosophy of intuition, the development of universal convictions
1-Melincourt Vol. II, P. 105.

truths which are inherent in the organization of mind, which cannot be obliterated, though they may be obscured, by superstitious prejudice on the one hand, and by the Aristotelian logic on the other. Mr Mac Quedy, "Well sir I have no notion of logic obsuring a question." And to this Mr Skionar makes emphatic answer. "There is only one true logic, which is the transcendental; and this can prove only the one true philosophy which is the transcendental. The logic of your modern Athens can prove evry thing equally; and that is, in my opinion, tantamount to proving nothing at all."

The colossal egotism of the assertions produces a subtle satire no doubt felt and much resented at the time of publication.

But Mr Flosky of "Nightmare Abbey" is chosen to present the very essence of egotism when he says "This rage for novelty is the bane of literature . Except my works and those of my particular friends, nothing is good that is not as old as Jerimy Taylor: and, entre nous, the best parts of my friends' books were either written or suggested by myself¹."

Coleridge was obscure, mystifying and terrific - and Mr Flosky's character is a keen satiric study. The influence upon Scythrop is apparent when he proposes to his lady love that they each open a vein in the other's arm, mix their blood in a bowl, and drink it as a sacrament of love. "Then" he exorts her, "we shall see visions of transcendental illumination, and soar on wings of ideas into the space of pure intelligence." Poor Marionetta rushes from the room, at the request, but the romancers of the day exalted to emotional heights the proposition would not appear outrageous.

1-Nightmare Abbey, P.49.

2-Ibid P.55.

Another example of obscurity from Mr. Flosky in his discussion of literature, "Very true, sir. Modern literature is a north-east wind- a blight of the human soul. I take credit to myself for having helped to make it so. The way to produce fine fruit is to blight the flower. You call this a paradox. Marry, so be it. Ponder thereon."¹ And yet again Flosky really reveals the spirit of his philosophy when he says that "Mystery is the very keystone of all that is beautiful in poetry, all that is sacred in faith and all that is recondite in transcendental psychology."² Peacock places the acme of of satire upon this character when Flosky says to Miss O'Carroll, If any person living could make report of having obtained any information on any subject from Ferdinando Flosky, my transcend-³
ental reputation would be ruined forever."

The transcendentalists were so unique, so pronounced in their philosophy that they virtually invited satiric allusion and Peacock with his same attitude toward the world was not slow to perceive the vulnerable points of exaggerated emotion, obscurity, and mystery.

Southey, as Mr. Sackbut, is let off with slight comment. Richard Garnett considers the etymology of the name to be taken from the Laureate's perquisite of a butt of sack. Mr. Flosky makes just one suggestive remark,- "An ode to the Red Book, by Roderick Sackbut, Esquire Em. His own poem reviewed by himself. Em-m-m."⁴

Nightmare Abbey is a satire directed against roman-

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| 1- Nightmare Abbey | P. 50 |
| 2- Ibid | P. 76 |
| 3- Ibid | P. 79 |
| 4- Ibid | P. 48 |

ticism and its exponents, Shelley, Byron, Coleridge and Southey. The satire is pungent and the hits are telling ones. Scythrop, Mr. Cypress, Mr. Flasky and Sackbut are characters which strikingly exemplify the types they are to represent. But in the "Melincourt" the principal character, Sir Oran Hutton, is the best of the creations of Peacock. The idea itself of introducing to polite English society as a member an orang outang caught in Angola and trained is preposterous and ludicrous viewed superficially. Sir Oran is taught the manners of a gentleman, his instincts are gentlemanly - he is decisive, quick to act in time of danger - becomes proficient as a flute player and finally has a seat bought for him in Parliament. He acquires all the essentials necessary to pass muster in good society with the exception of the power of speech and his invariable politeness quite makes up for this lack. In spite of the apparent improbability of the idea of the character Peacock has made him the central figure in the book and he bases the conception of Sir Oran upon the scientific theories. "There is not a quality or an action attributed to Sir Oran which is not based upon grave extracts from writings by Linnaeus and Buffon and above all by Lord Monboddo." ¹

When he wrote Melincourt, Peacock had no idea of the real importance, scientifically, of the theories he was weaving into his character. "Undreaming of the future of Darwinism, unenlightened as to the "survival of the fittest" he had playfully wrought into shape of humor and fiction the theories of Lord Monboddo for an age not advanced enough to receive much

impression with the anthropo-simian approaches to reasoning faculty,- manifested in Sir Oran¹."

The developement of the character in accordance with scientific possibilities makes it doubly interesting but the interest is much aroused when reading of Sir Oran merely as a ludicrously conceived improbability.

Mr. Forester describes his protégé as of a contemplative disposition and habitually taciturn. This is humor of a kind when we remember that Sir Oran is not capable of speech. Sir Telegraph Paxarrett found his "phisiognomy"² humorous and said, "Possibly, I have seen an uglier fellow." Chapter six Peacock devotes to a discussion of age, education and accomplishments of Sir Oran Hautton, strenuously defending his position that Sir Oran is one of mankind.

Peacock makes Sir Oran the "deus ex machina" of the book. Three times he rescues Anthelia, the heroine. First, from imminent danger of drowning after the storm, displaying prodigious strength and agility- actually pulling up a pinetree to bridge the chasm. Again, from the would-be abductors and a third time from the castle of Lord Achthar where she has been imprisoned. Sir Oran retains his quality of imitativeness and Peacock makes us infer that it is the quality which enables him to acquire the ways of mankind so quickly. A rather humorous incident of his imitativeness is the following occurring just after his rescue of Anthelia.

"Lord Anophel (a society fop) now came up, and survey Sir Oran

1- Contemporary Review Vol. 25 P. 733

2- Melincourt Vol. 1 P. 42

through his quizzing-glass, who making him a polite bow, took his quizzing-glass from him and examined him thru it in the same manner." And at another time, seeing an artist sketching from nature, Sir Oran rushed up, the terrified artist fled and Sir Oran possessed himself of the seat, palette and brushes of the painter, evidently considering how best to paint a picture on his account. Sir Oran surely manifests affection, gentleness and sympathy - and altho he was originally created as a burlesque figure Peacock "lived to see the curious theories which he developed so wonderfully in Melincourt -- assuming an importance in the history of science which fairly startled him."

So Peacock,-a classicist, a pagan, a jovial epicurean, an eighteenth century gentleman living in the nineteenth century among romantic literary contemporaries, amidst the rush of reforms and political conditions of which he did not approve -- held himself aloof and was personally untouched and uninfluenced. He led a peaceful, quiet, pleasant life. Being a keen observer of mankind and an appreciator of the ludicrous, he sent forth these shafts of his humor and satire at friend and stranger alike--all that appealed to his good sense and sanity as extravagant or out of proportion was held up to the amused gaze of the public.

We can only regret that the purity of his style, his clever humor and keen satire has not offset the tediousness of his learned discussions and that his books - some of which contain material well worth while - are not more generally

appreciated by the English reading people.





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